UNITED STATE DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CIVIL ACTION

DAWN MORGAN

:

:

Plaintiff

NO.

v.

:

RELIANCE STANDARD LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

:

Defendant

COMPLAINT

The Plaintiff, Dawn Morgan, by and through her attorney, HALMON L. BANKS, III, ESQUIRE, files the instant complaint against the Defendant, Reliance Standard Life Insurance Company and alleges the following facts in support thereof:

PARTIES

- 1. At all times material hereto, Plaintiff, Dawn Morgan, was and still is a resident of the state of Pennsylvania residing at 7221 Belmont Avenue, Mays Landing, NJ 08330.
- 2. Upon information and belief, at all times material hereto, Defendant, Reliance Standard Life Insurance Company, ("Reliance") has its principal place of business at 2001 Market Street, Suite 1500, Philadelphia, PA 19103

JURISDICTION

- Jurisdiction of the Court is based upon 29 U.S.C. § 1132 (e)(1) and 1132 (f), which give the District Courts jurisdiction to hear civil actions brought to recover benefits due under the terms of an employee welfare benefit plan. Jurisdiction is also found at 28 U.S.C. § 1331 because this action arises under 29 U.S.C. § 1001 et. seq. (Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, hereinafter referred to as "ERISA").
- 4. Venue in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania is appropriate because Defendant conducts business and is subject to personal jurisdiction in the jurisdictional district and, maintains contacts in the jurisdictional district sufficient to subject it to personal jurisdiction.

5. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 139 (a)(1) and § 139 (c), this action is properly venued in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

FACTS

- 6. At all times material hereto, Plaintiff was an employee of Virtua Health located at 425 12th Street in Hammonton, NJ 08037.
- 7. Plaintiff's job title relevant to this action was Office Assistant.
- 8. At all times during her employment with Virtua Health, the Plaintiff was a participant and/or beneficiary under their Long Term Disability ("LTD") plan.
- 9. The LTD plan is an employee welfare benefit plan specifically covered under ERISA, 29 U.S.C. § 1001 (2)(A).
- 10. At all times material hereto, Defendant made and/or participated in making all benefit decisions under their LTD plan.
- 11. During Plaintiff's employment with Virtua Health, Defendant issued a Long Term group disability income policy, (hereinafter referred to as "Policy").
- 12. At all times material hereto, said disability Policy of insurance was issued for the benefit of certain eligible employees in exchange for the payment of premiums by Virtua Health and/or its employees.
- 13. At all times material hereto, Plaintiff was and is an employee eligible for LTD benefits as an insured under the Policy.
- 14. Said Policy provided, among other things, that LTD insurance benefit payments will be made to Plaintiff in the event that she becomes disabled as a result of an injury or sickness.
- 15. "Totally Disabled" and "Total Disability" under the Policy is the "result of an Injury or Sickness; (1). During the Elimination Period and for the first 24 months for which a Monthly Benefit is payable, an Insured cannot perform the material duties of his/her regular occupation {emphasis added]; (2) after a Monthly Benefit has been paid for 24 months, an Insured cannot perform the material duties of any occupation. Any occupation is one that the Insureds education training or experience will reasonably allow. We consider the Insured Totally Disabled if due to an Injury or Sickness he or she is only capable of performing the material duties on a part-time basis or part of the material duties on a full-time basis."

- 16. On or about March 1, 2016, during the period within which her coverages were in full force and effect, while Plaintiff was an eligible employee, Plaintiff became disabled within the meaning of, and pursuant to, the terms of the Policy.
- 17. As of this date, Plaintiff continues to be disabled in that she is unable to perform, on a sustained basis, her prior occupation or any gainful occupation in her own local economy for which she might be qualified, as these terms are defined under the subject Policy.
- 18. Plaintiff's disability is caused primarily by intractable lower back pain with lumbar radiculopathy; problems from a cracked pelvic bone during a C-Section; left hip arthralgia; GERD; chronic right knee instability caused by multiple ligament tears with osteoarthritis and chondromalacia; anxiety and depression, all of which cause her to suffer a significant limitation in her functional capacity.
- 19. By letter dated April 19, 2017, Defendant advised Plaintiff that she was not entitled to disability benefits under Policy.
- 20. On October 13, 2017, Plaintiff filed a written request for appeal/review of the Defendant's denial dated April 19, 2017 of her application for LTD benefits.
- 21. By letter dated February 26, 2018, Defendant advised Plaintiff that their original decision to deny her application for LTD benefits would continue. Defendant also advised Plaintiff in the letter that "our claim decision is now final as Ms. Morgan has exhausted any administrative remedies available to her under the terms of the Policy."
- 22. Plaintiff cooperated with the Defendant in all respects, provided proper proof of her loss in support of her claim and, otherwise complied with the Policy terms and conditions regarding the filing and maintenance of her claim.
- 23. Pursuant to the Policy, Defendant was obligated to commence the periodic payment of monthly LTD benefits to Plaintiff following the expiration of her elimination period.
- 24. Despite Plaintiff's continued total disability, Defendant has denied all LTD insurance benefits to Plaintiff and continues to refuse to pay benefits pursuant to the Policy, although payment thereof has been duly demanded.
- 25. Said refusal on the part of the Defendant is a willful and wrongful breach of the Policy's terms and conditions.
- 26. Defendant breached the Policy by not adhering to the LTD summary plan description in its notices of denial.

- 27. In denying Plaintiff's application for LTD benefits, Defendant's failure to notify Plaintiff that they would be contacting her physicians to question their medical findings and restrictions and, failure to notify her that the information gathered from these telephone calls would be given weight in the decision making process, prevented Plaintiff's ability to perfect her claim for LTD insurance benefits under the Policy.
- 28. Defendant also neglected to provide an explanation of the scientific or clinical judgement used as grounds for denying the claim and, such failure prevented the perfection of Plaintiff's LTD claim.
- 29. Defendant afforded little weight to the opinions of Plaintiff's treating physicians who clearly stated that she has not been able to work since June 18, 2016 because of her disabling conditions.
- 30. Defendant's denial of Plaintiff's LTD insurance benefits is unreasonable and unsupported by substantial evidence and, as such, constitutes a breach of their fiduciary duty as it relates to the Policy.
- 31. Defendant's unreasonable and unsupported denial of Plaintiff's LTD claim is evidenced by the number of procedural irregularities in its claims handling, including but not limited to: the failure to consider the impact of Plaintiff's physical and mental conditions and limitations on her ability to perform all of the essential duties of her regular occupation or, any occupation; the refusal to consider Plaintiff's credible subjective complaints about her inability to work; the reliance upon a selective review of medical records to reach a result-oriented claims determination; the failure to utilize appropriate qualified and unbiased medical professionals to reach decisions and/or render opinions on levels of impairment; the biased and flawed vocational analysis of Plaintiff's claim; the failure to perform a fair and neutral evaluation of Plaintiff's medical condition, her significant restrictions and limitations caused by her conditions and, other forms of biased claims handling.
- 32. Defendant's claims handling resulted in numerous violations of 29 C.F.R. § 2560.503-1 et. seq.
- 33. Defendant's claims handling failed to provide Plaintiff with a full and fair review of her claim.
- 34. Defendant's claims handling demonstrates a bias against Plaintiff's claim due to its impact on Defendant's financial situation and, it frustrated Plaintiff from receiving a full and fair review of her claim.
- 35. Plaintiff exhausted all administrative appeals and remedies to the extent that they exist pursuant to the terms of the Policy/employee benefit plan.

- 36. By reason of the foregoing claims handling conduct, Defendant failed, by operation of law, to establish and follow reasonable claims procedures that would yield a fair decision on the merits of Plaintiff's claim. 29 C.F.R. § 2560.503 (1).
- 37. Because Defendant failed to satisfy the minimal procedural safeguards set forth in 29 C.F.R. § 2560.503 (1), Defendant's adverse benefit determination is not entitled to any judicial deference.
- 38. Defendant willfully failed to comply with ERISA regulations.
- 39. Monthly disability insurance benefits to Plaintiff are still due and owing by Defendant on a continual basis.
- 40. Plaintiff is entitled to receive total life-time LTD benefits under the Policy, discounted to present value, due to the Defendant's arbitrary and capricious decision to deny Plaintiff's LTD claim.
- Plaintiff is entitled to receive, in addition to the benefits due under the Policy, reimbursement for reasonable attorney's fees and costs incurred to litigation this action pursuant to 29 U.S.C. 1132 (g).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, Dawn Morgan prays that she may have a declaratory judgement herein declaring the rights and legal obligations of the parties hereto regarding the matters set forth in the Complaint as follows:

- a) Plaintiff is disabled pursuant to the language and within the meaning of the subject Policy of insurance issued by Defendant in that she is unable to perform the duties of her own occupation, or any gainful occupation within her local economy which she is qualified to perform by virtue of her education, training and experience;
- b) Defendant is obligated to pay continuing LTD benefits to the Plaintiff pursuant to the Policy and, shall pay all benefits in arrears since the denial of benefits, plus interest;
- c) Defendant's obligation to pay benefits to Plaintiff shall continue as long as she remains disabled per the terms of the Policy, subject to the applicable benefit period in the Policy;
- d) Defendant is obligated to pay Plaintiff total life-time LTD benefits under the Policy, discounted to present value;
- e) Plaintiff shall be afforded appropriate equitable relief to redress Defendant's violation of the terms of the Policy, and/or any other appropriate relief, as provided for by <u>CIGNA v. Amara</u>, 131 S.Ct. 1866 (2011).
- f) Pursuant to ERISA § 502 et. seq., Plaintiff shall be entitled to recoup attorney's fees, as well as all other costs incurred in this action, along with pre-judgment and post-judgment interest;
- g) Plaintiff may return to this Court, upon motion, to seek further declaratory relief in the event it becomes necessary; and,

h) Such other relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

By:

HALMON L. BANKS, III, ESQUIRE

Attorney I.D. No. 45113

BANKS LAW

Two Logan Square

100 North 18th Street, Suite 1910

Philadelphia, PA 19103

(215) 561-1000

Attorney for Plaintiff

Date: 3/12/18

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, HALMON L. BANKS, III, ESQUIRE, certify that on this date the foregoing *Complaint* was filed electronically on the CM/ECF website for the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and is available for viewing by all electronic filers through the court's CM/ECF system.

HALMON L. BANKS, III, ESQUIRE

Attorney I.D. No. 45113

Date: 3/12/18

JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

		,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,								
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS						
DAWN MORGAN 7221 Belmont Avenue				RELIANCE STANDARD LIFE INSURANCE CO.						
				2001 Market St., Ste 1500, Phila., PA						
Mays Landing, NJ 08330 (b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Atlantic				G / CD - 11 C Plant I inted Defendant						
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)				(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)						
122	1024 1 111 01011 111111 1111	/		NOTE: IN LAND CO	NDEMNATI	ON CASES, USE TH	E LOCATION ()F		
				THE TRACT	OF LAND IN	WOLVED.				
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, A	Address, and Telephone Number	-)		Attorneys (If Known)						
(C) Attorneys (Firm Name, 2	iuaress, una Telephone Itamber	,		2 (3 .						
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in O	ne Box Only)		FIZENSHIP OF PI	RINCIPA	L PARTIES ((Place an "X" in (and One Box fo			
□ 1 U.S. Government			(4	PTF DEF PTF DEF						
Plaintiff (U.S. Government Not a Party)			Citizer	of This State		Incorporated or Prin		□ 4	4	
	· ·					of Business In Tl	his State			
2 U.S. Government	1 4 Diversity		Citizer	of Another State	2 🗇 2	Incorporated and Pr	rincipal Place	O 5	□ 5	
Defendant		ip of Parties in Item III)		of Business In Another State						
			Citizer	Citizen or Subject of a 3 3 Foreign Nation 6 6 6						
				eign Country						
IV. NATURE OF SUIT	(Place an "X" in One Box On	ıly)				here for: Nature o				
CONTRACT	TO	RTS	FO	RFEITURE/PENALTY	BAN	KRUPTCY	OTHERS		ES	
☐ 110 Insurance	PERSONAL INJURY	PERSONAL INJURY	1 -	Drug Related Seizure		eal 28 USC 158	375 False Cla			
☐ 120 Marine ☐ 130 Miller Act	☐ 310 Airplane ☐ 315 Airplane Product	365 Personal Injury - Product Liability	□ 690	of Property 21 USC 881 Other	☐ 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157		376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a))			
130 Willer Act 140 Negotiable Instrument	Liability	☐ 367 Health Care/					☐ 400 State Reapportionment			
☐ 150 Recovery of Overpayment	☐ 320 Assault, Libel &	Pharmaceutical				RTY RIGHTS	☐ 410 Antitrust☐ 430 Banks an		~	
& Enforcement of Judgment 151 Medicare Act	Slander ☐ 330 Federal Employers'	Personal Injury Product Liability			☐ 820 Copy ☐ 830 Pater		450 Commer		ś	
☐ 152 Recovery of Defaulted	Liability	368 Asbestos Personal	ı		☐ 835 Paten	it - Abbreviated	☐ 460 Deportat	ion		
Student Loans	☐ 340 Marine	Injury Product				Drug Application	☐ 470 Racketee			
(Excludes Veterans)	345 Marine Product	Liability PERSONAL PROPER	ידע	LABOR	SOCIAL	emark SECURITY	480 Consum	Organizati er Credit	ons	
☐ 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits	Liability 350 Motor Vehicle	☐ 370 Other Fraud		Fair Labor Standards	☐ 861 HIA		490 Cable/Sa			
☐ 160 Stockholders' Suits	☐ 355 Motor Vehicle	☐ 371 Truth in Lending		Act	☐ 862 Black	k Lung (923)	☐ 850 Securitie		dities/	
☐ 190 Other Contract	Product Liability	☐ 380 Other Personal	☐ 720	Labor/Management	863 DIW	C/DIWW (405(g))	Exchange 890 Other St		rtione	
☐ 195 Contract Product Liability ☐ 196 Franchise	☐ 360 Other Personal Injury	Property Damage 385 Property Damage	740	Relations Railway Labor Act	☐ 865 RSI (☐ 891 Agricult		шош	
C 190 Handingo	362 Personal Injury -	Product Liability		Family and Medical			☐ 893 Environn			
	Medical Malpractice	PRISONER PETITION	NG 700	Leave Act Other Labor Litigation	FFDFD	AL TAX SUITS	☐ 895 Freedom Act	or intorm	lation	
REAL PROPERTY 210 Land Condemnation	CIVIL RIGHTS 1 440 Other Civil Rights	Habeas Corpus:		Employee Retirement		s (U.S. Plaintiff	☐ 896 Arbitration	on		
220 Foreclosure	441 Voting	☐ 463 Alien Detainee		Income Security Act	or D	efendant)	☐ 899 Adminis			
☐ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment	☐ 442 Employment	510 Motions to Vacate	•			-Third Party ISC 7609	Act/Revi Agency I	iew or App	peal of	
☐ 240 Torts to Land ☐ 245 Tort Product Liability	☐ 443 Housing/ Accommodations	Sentence 530 General			200	SC 7609	950 Constitut		f	
290 All Other Real Property	445 Amer. w/Disabilities -	☐ 535 Death Penalty	88.6191A	IMMIGRATION			State Sta	tutes		
	Employment	Other:		Naturalization Application						
	446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other	☐ 540 Mandamus & Othe ☐ 550 Civil Rights	er 13 463	Other Immigration Actions						
	☐ 448 Education	☐ 555 Prison Condition								
		560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of								
		Confinement								
V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" is	n One Box Only)									
•	**	Remanded from	J 4 Reins	tated or 🛛 5 Transfe	rred from	☐ 6 Multidistri		Multidis		
		Appellate Court	Reope	ened Another	r District	Litigation Transfer		Litigatio Direct Fil		
	Cita the TIC Civil Ste	stute under which you a	ra filing (D.	(specify) o not cite jurisdictional state				DHOOLIT		
	1	itute tinuer which you at	te ming (Di	o noi che jurisaichonui siui	utes untess ut	reisity).				
VI. CAUSE OF ACTION	Brief description of ca	iuse:								
	l			3.5.4.NTD @		VIECK VEC	if domandad in	loi		
VII. REQUESTED IN CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.			d DE	DEMAND \$ CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND:						
COMPLAINT:		3, F.K.CV.F.			J	URY DEMAND:		DNO		
VIII. RELATED CASI	E(S)									
IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKE	ET NUMBER				
DATE	// /	SIGNATURE OF AT	TORNEY O	F RECORD						
3/12/2018										
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY										
	MOUNT	APPLYING IFP		JUDGE		MAG. JUD	GE			
KELEIFI# AN	MODITI	TH DIMINITA		.0202						

Case 2:18-cv-01079-MAK Document 1 Filed 03/13/18 Page 9 of 10 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA — DESIGNATION FORM to be used by counsel to indicate the category of the case for the purpose of assignment to appropriate calendar. Address of Plaintiff: 7221 Belmont Avenue, Mays Landing, NJ 08330 Address of Defendant: 2001 Market Street, Ste. 1500, Philadelphia, PA 19103 Place of Accident, Incident or Transaction: ERISA-Recovery of benefits due under the terms of an employee welfare benefit plan. Does this civil action involve a nongovernmental corporate party with any parent corporation and any publicly held corporation owning 10% or more of its stock? Yes□ No⊠ (Attach two copies of the Disclosure Statement Form in accordance with Fed.R.Civ.P. 7.1(a)) Yes□ NoX Does this case involve multidistrict litigation possibilities? RELATED CASE, IF ANY: Date Terminated: Case Number: Judge Civil cases are deemed related when yes is answered to any of the following questions: 1. Is this case related to property included in an earlier numbered suit pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court? 2. Does this case involve the same issue of fact or grow out of the same transaction as a prior suit pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court? Yes□ NoX I 3. Does this case involve the validity or infringement of a patent already in suit or any earlier numbered case pending or within one year previously NoX terminated action in this court? 4. Is this case a second or successive habeas corpus, social security appeal, or pro se civil rights case filed by the same individual? Yes NoX CIVIL: (Place 🗸 in one category only) B. Diversity Jurisdiction Cases: A. Federal Question Cases: 1. □ Insurance Contract and Other Contracts 1.

Indemnity Contract, Marine Contract, and All Other Contracts 2.

Airplane Personal Injury 2. D FELA 3. D Assault, Defamation 3. □ Jones Act-Personal Injury 4.

Marine Personal Injury 4.

Antitrust 5. D Motor Vehicle Personal Injury 5. □ Patent 6. □ Other Personal Injury (Please specify) 6. □ Labor-Management Relations 7. D Products Liability 7. Civil Rights 8. □ Products Liability — Asbestos 8.

Habeas Corpus 9.

All other Diversity Cases 9. □ Securities Act(s) Cases 10. □ Social Security Review Cases (Please specify) (Please specify) ERISA, 29 USC §§1132(e)(1); 1132(f) ARBITRATION CERTIFICATION (Check Appropriate Category) Halmon L. Banks, counsel of record do hereby certify: EX Pursuant to Local Civil Rule 53.2, Section 3(c)(2), that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the damages recoverable in this civil action case exceed the sum of \$150,000.00 exclusive of interest and costs; □ Relief other than monetary damages is sought. DATE:3/12/2018 Attorney I.D.# Attorney at-Law NOTE: A trial de novo will be a trial by jury only if there has been compliance with F.R.C.P. 38. I certify that, to my knowledge, the within case is not related to any case now pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court except as noted above. 45113 DATE: 3/12/2018 Attorney I.D.# Attorney-at-Law

CIV. 609 (5/2012)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CASE MANAGEMENT TRACK DESIGNATION FORM

CIVIL ACTION

<u> Felephone</u>	FAX Number	E-Mail Address				
215-561-1000	215-561-1020	hbanks@bankslaw.com	1			
Date	Attorney-at-law	Attorney for				
3/12/2018	Halmon L. Banks, III	Plaintiff				
(f) Standard Management –	Cases that do not fall into any or	ne of the other tracks.	(X)			
commonly referred to as	Cases that do not fall into tracks (a complex and that need special or ide of this form for a detailed exp	r intense management by	()			
(d) Asbestos – Cases involving claims for personal injury or property damage from exposure to asbestos.						
(c) Arbitration – Cases required to be designated for arbitration under Local Civil Rule 53.2.						
(b) Social Security – Cases requesting review of a decision of the Secretary of Health and Human Services denying plaintiff Social Security Benefits.						
(a) Habeas Corpus – Cases brought under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 through § 2255.						
SELECT ONE OF THE FO	OLLOWING CASE MANAGE	MENT TRACKS:				
plaintiff shall complete a Ca filing the complaint and serveside of this form.) In the eddesignation, that defendant sethe plaintiff and all other parts	•	on Form in all civil cases at the ting 1:03 of the plan set forth on the reagree with the plaintiff regarding bornit to the clerk of court and ser Designation Form specifying the	me of verse said ve on			

(Civ. 660) 10/02

DAWN MORGAN